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Toynbee's Odyssey of the West

—Christopher Dawson

THE

Commonweal

FALL BOOK ISSUE

A Reckoning with My Readers

by Elisabeth Langgaesser

Jessamyn West

Carol Johnson

Irwin W. Geissman

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THE

Commonweal

week by week

THE FORGOTTEN PAST

THESE days, charging a man with "following the Communist line" is one of the easiest ways of winning a debate. For our part we think the device has a very limited value. The Communist line shifts and turns, and at various times it has included—on paper, at least—goals which are good and worthy, like support of labor organizations, and the struggle to win interracial justice. If the Christian social reformer is to be charged with following the Communist Party line for espousing such causes, the battle is obviously lost.

One interesting point about this business of charging others with following the Party line, however, is the shortness of memory which afflicts many Americans these days. An article in the Fall issue of the *Antioch Review* called "Who 'Collaborated' with Russia?" provides some timely background on this subject. In it Paul Willen cites a few facts about the war years which most people seem to have forgotten.

In 1943, for example, *Collier's* said that Russia was "evolving from a sort of Fascism . . . toward something resembling our own or Great Britain's democracy." The *Saturday Evening Post* did not let *Collier's* have all the material sympathetic to the Soviet Union; between 1943 and 1945 the *Post* published twenty-four articles on Russia by associate editor Edgar Snow "whose pro-Soviet sympathies were unmistakable," as Mr. Willen puts it.

In 1943 *Life* described its difficulties in putting out a special issue on Soviet-American cooperation. The Russians, *Life* explained, "live under a system of tight, state-controlled information." Then, *Life* went on: "But probably the attitude to take toward this is not to get too excited about it. When we take into account what the USSR has accomplished in twenty years of its existence we can make allowances for certain shortcomings, however deplorable. . . .If the Soviet leaders tell us that the control of information was necessary to get this job done, we can afford to take their word for it."

Life had more to say. Lenin, according to that magazine in 1943, was the "well-balanced" leader of the Bolsheviks who "made the Revolution make sense and saved it from much of the folly of the French Revolution." The dread NKVD was called "a national police similar to the FBI" whose job was "tracking down traitors."

General Douglas MacArthur said in 1942: "The world situation at the present time indicates that the hopes of civilization rest on the worthy banners of the courageous Russian Army." In 1943 Senator Thomas of Utah compared the Red Army to the forces of Washington. "Freed by the people's army," he said, "Russia today knows what she is fighting for. Men, women, and even children, have tasted freedom. They call it good."

IN a 1944 letter to the New York *Times,* Wendell Willkie wrote that while "some people have suggested that Mr. Roosevelt had gone too far" at Moscow, Cairo and Teheran, "in my judgment, he has not gone far enough." Airlines-executive Eddie Rickenbacker came back from the USSR "particularly impressed" with the "iron discipline in [Soviet] industrial plants, the severe punishment for chronic absenteeism, incentive pay, compulsory overtime work and 'no labor difficulties.' "

Nor were newspaper and magazine editors and public figures the only ones so optimistic about the Soviet Union. In a Roper poll conducted by *Fortune* in 1943, the group designated as "executives" had the greatest confidence in Soviet postwar intentions; forty-eight per cent were convinced that "after the war. . .Russia. . .will not try to bring about Communist governments in other countries."

When the story of the Katyn Forest massacre was made public, it was dismissed in most quarters as a piece of German-inspired anti-Russian propaganda. There were dissenting voices on this point, of course, and Mr. Willen singles out for mention on this score the *New Leader,* the *American Mer-*

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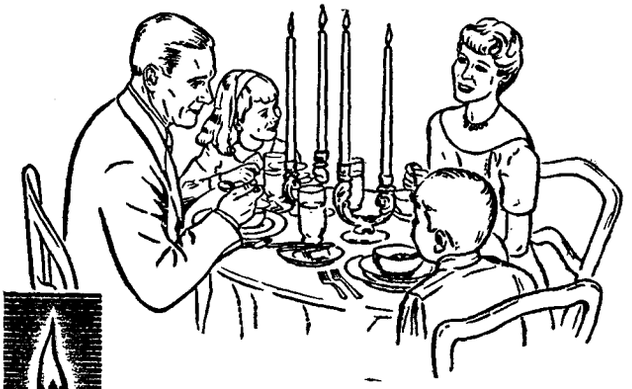

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THIS WEEK

Week by Week 51

A Reckoning with My Readers
by Elisabeth Langgaesser 56

Sonnet
by Carol Johnson 59

The Stage
by Richard Hayes 60

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 60

Two Poems About War
by Jessamyn West 61

Toynbee's Odyssey of the West
by Christopher Dawson 62

Book Reviews 68

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cury, and The Commonweal. But most newspapers played the story down, dismissing it outright or burying it in the back pages.

Why did such well known national figures and publications make such statements? Some people would have it that the Communists had taken them over, lock, stock and barrel. We cannot accept that explanation; there were Communists, but there just were not that many.

No, it seems to us that such statements, naive as they were, in most cases simply represented the widespread desire to win the war, to keep the Allies together, to avoid criticizing comrades-in-arms, to nourish the hope—in their own hearts as well as the average citizen's—that peace would come once the Axis was defeated. Call it naiveté, call it mass-hypnotism, call it self-delusion, call it what you will. But it did happen; it was a fact. And because such mass-delusion did happen, and because millions of Americans were naive enough to accept it, it does seem a little more humility, a little more soul-searching all the way around would be in order today—and not least on the part of those whose own records on this matter will not stand too serious a scrutiny.

"EVERY DECENT AMERICAN . . . ."

WE have sometimes been told, even by our friends, that during the past few years we have exaggerated the McCarthy hysteria as it affects certain sections of Catholic opinion. We here reprint, in full, the lead editorial from the October 1 issue of *The Florida Catholic,* newspaper of the diocese of St. Augustine, Florida. The editorial's title is "Moscow Wins, If McCarthy Is Censured." Italics have been added.

"This year has seen an unbroken sequence of Communist victories all over the world. In Indochina, France, England, Germany, Japan, South America, the Reds are winning new prestige and seizing new positions of dominance. America is fast losing the cold war abroad.

"This week saw the Communists score a signal victory here in the United States. Senator Watkins' committee recommended that America's most distinguished and most successful fighter against Communism be censured by the United States Senate. This is a fact of the deepest significance. The Communists have started a purge of their enemies right here in the capital of our country.

"Just as Mendès-France has succeeded in cashiering the first enemy of Communist subversion in France, so *the agents of the Kremlin in our government and in our political parties are attempting to liquidate Senator McCarthy in the United States of America. If they succeed, this may be a greater victory for Moscow than the winning of China. It would mean the winning of the United States.*

"Through stupidity and treasons, we have lost out in Asia and Europe. Loyal Americans must unite now to prevent the loss of our own country to the enemy.

"Senator McCarthy is more than an individual fighter against the Red menace; he is a symbol of America's fight for survival as a free, honorable, Christian republic.

"We call upon every decent American to rally to his support."

CENTRAL AMERICAN FEDERATION

WHEN the leading contenders in modern power politics grew in military strength toward present proportions, the inability of smaller nations to defend themselves became painfully clear. To this end, the bravery of Belgium proved of little avail, as did that of a larger country such as Poland. Except on the territorial fringes neutrality was impossible and alliances were no longer enough. The realization that there had to be general defense against an armed aggressor led directly to the establishment of the League of Nations some thirty-five years ago.

The realities of power politics, which have now

COMING

BARBARA WARD writes about the world responsibilities of Christians in the November 5 Thirtieth Anniversary Issue.

"Ours is the first century in which men move round the world as they once moved round New—and old—England. Ours is the first century in which the livelihood of a Malayan peasant can be determined by a Congressional decision to maintain synthetic rubber factories in the United States. Physical interdependence has become a fact for a large part of humanity. What has *not accompanied* this sudden development is any enlargement of the sense of mankind's moral interdependence. In other words, the physical realization of Christianity's deepest insight has come about. But the truth itself—that men are brothers and that we are our brother's keeper—is as shadowy and remote as it was when Marco Polo arrived at the court of the Great Khan or Columbus set sail for the Indies."

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reduced world leadership to two great powers, with a third formidable contender in the process of development, have not obliterated national sentiments. Among the threatened and the victimized these feelings have frequently become even more intense. In many lands pride in one's language, culture and traditional way of life is greater than ever.

But along with a concentration of military power that has thrown national defenses and old-line alliances into the dustbins of history, new economic realities have grown up. The impossibility of fruitful economic relations today, in the face of numerous tariff barriers, currency disparities and exchange restrictions, national import and export quotas, and the like, should be almost axiomatic.

Some of the promoters of Benelux undoubtedly conceived of the virtual economic union of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg primarily as a first step toward a much wider union embracing all of Western Europe. But those lands themselves were impelled by immediate economic necessities to move in this fashion against outmoded trade barriers.

Wholly independent currencies, economies, and even national sovereignties, on the part of the world's smaller nations at least, no longer appear practicable. It is therefore encouraging to note that recognition of such difficulties is also growing in the Western hemisphere. Mutual economic cooperation among Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador has reached the point where representatives of these five sovereign nations at the UN are now talking in terms of some sort of political unification or federation.

As nations go, these five together would still constitute a small nation; its population would total but eight millions. But the economic, cultural, civic and other common advantages which would emanate from such integration would be manifold. The recent setting up of an Advanced School of Public Administration at San Jose, Costa Rica, for the training of public officials for all five countries is but one example what such integration can do.

THE MOLOTOV SNARE

VYACHESLAV Molotov looked over his collection of monkey wrenches, and in East Berlin on October 6, he threw the largest into the machinery of German rearmament.

The London conference had agreed to bring West Germany into NATO. At last it looked as if German rearmament within a European system was practical and imminent. Mr. Molotov had to stop it, and his tool was the proposal that Germany be unified and neutralized.

This time he did not talk, as he had at the Berlin conference, about negotiations between the Bonn and Communist governments plus "democratic organizations"—meaning Communist and Communist-front groups. He implied that he might be willing to see free elections throughout Germany—so long as Germany did not rearm and was "neutralized."

Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden immediately rejected the idea, as did Chancellor Adenauer. But Molotov's wrench is not so easily extracted from the gears.

The Social Democratic party in West Germany is opposed to the London plan. It argues that reunification is the important thing for Germany; right-wing groups within the Adenauer coalition agree. They want to talk business with Molotov.

Elsewhere in Europe, neutralism is strong and the idea of taking Germany out of the game, of sending her to the sidelines, is an attractive answer.

The problem is that Germany, unified or divided, armed or—temporally—disarmed, cannot be sent out of the game. Germany sits astride the center of Europe. If the cold war should turn hot, Germany would be the first nation to be marched across. No nation, even if it were without the industrial and economic power of Germany, could be in such a position and not try to control its fate.

"Neutralization" is, we believe, a delusion; and Mr. Molotov's plan a snare. The hope for Europe lies in a Germany integrated into a free European community.

FARRELL AND THE IRISH

WHEN James T. Farrell wrote the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy during the early thirties he was a young and very angry man—angry with Chicago, angry with the Irish, and angry with the parochial Catholicism he had known as a youth. The result was, obviously, an angry book, a great, sprawling indictment of an era and a culture.

But *Studs Lonigan* was more than an angry book; it was also a book full of love for those whom it chastized. It was in many ways a morality play. Farrell did not attack the Irish or the Church as such. He attacked the caricatures of both he had met in his own milieu.

James T. Farrell is no longer as angry as he was, but he is still as honest, and so he still attacks caricatures which attempt to pass for the real thing. In the October issue of *Commentary*, for example, he attacks the caricature of the

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Church that Paul Blanshard has set up in *The Irish and Catholic Power*. Without softening his own criticism of many features of Irish-Catholic culture, Farrell points out the dogmatic intolerance of Mr. Blanshard's thesis. The result is a mature refutation of Blanshardism.

It is good to see that James T. Farrell is still capable of fine indignation, that he still has his passion for the authentic. It is especially good to see the essential intolerance of *The Irish and Catholic Power* exposed by the author of *Studs Lonigan*. Mr. Farrell has lost none of his capacity for spotting the bigot in any camp.

NUCLEAR WAR IV

A PRINCIPAL figure in the debate which has marked this atomic crisis of 1954 is Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor, former chief of the Air Staff of the RAF, designer of the British "new look" in military policy, and author of the book *Strategy for the West*.

Air Marshal Slessor has argued his case in the pages of *Air Force* magazine and *Foreign Affairs*. Now, in this fourth of an editorial series on nuclear war, we will summarize the chief points of his position as we understand them.

"There is not the smallest doubt," he says, that if a total war were to come to the world, mass-destruction weapons would be used from the beginning. A total war, under present conditions, would bring an immediate series of catastrophic raids against both sides, a practical defense against which would be impossible. "Can anyone really believe that any nation could put up with [such attack] and retain the ability to wage coherent war?" His answer is no. His conclusion is that total war, understood as unlimited nuclear bombardment, is now *impractical* for either side; hence total war "has abolished itself as a practical instrument of policy."

Yet Slessor maintains that the threat of such a war is an indispensible instrument for the West, as it provides a "cover" under which a more restrained—and more practical—cold war can be waged. From this point he draws the conclusion that the abolition of nuclear weapons would actually be a disservice to the West, as it would reinstate the conditions under which "total war" (in the World War II sense) would again be a "practical instrument of policy."

(Of course, the Western position on nuclear disarmament has consistently been that atomic and hydrogen disarmament must be accompanied by an internationally supervised disarmament in conventional weapons. The latest Soviet statement on the subject, made at the UN in the first days of this fall's General Assembly session, ostensibly concedes this point. Whether the Soviets mean what they say remains to be seen.)

Slessor goes on to argue that under this nuclear "cover" the West can fight Communist aggression politically, and, if necessary, with conventional military methods. He approvingly quotes Dean Acheson's statement that the limited kind of war we fought in Korea is anything but a war which we 'cannot afford;' is, in fact, "the only kind that we or anyone else can afford."

But if local wars and political measures fail; if we are faced, say, with a great Soviet land invasion of Western Europe; what then? Slessor commends to us the example of what the RAF, in the thirties, called "Air Control." This tactic was used against tribal enemies on the Indian frontier, in Iraq and Arabia. It consisted of air bombardment preceded by a warning to the target community or fortress to evacuate non-combatants. The bombing then continued until the tribesmen submitted, and then it was instantly suspended. Air Control was never used against a non-tribal enemy, and it requires a considerable measure of superiority over an enemy defense of a kind tribal enemies do not have, as well as a more than considerable measure of prudence and forebearance on the part of a nation's military leaders. But Slessor feels that this precedent offers the framework for making the use of nuclear weapons a sane and practical policy.

Statements in the past year by both British and American air officers have indicated that they too are thinking about the possibility of a system of air warnings. General Nathan Twining, U.S. Air Chief of Staff, has denied that America would bomb indiscriminately, and has said, "we can now aim directly to disarm an enemy rather than to destroy him."

The case which Air Marshal Slessor makes surely is an imposing one, and his experience and knowledge in these matters is great. But it seems to this magazine that his claim that total war has "abolished itself" is excessively sanguine, resting, as it does, on the assumption that Soviet leaders will act rationally. They certainly are not fools, but they are desperate men, will become more desperate if their empire starts to crumble, and in the past have done things which were both "unthinkable" and "impractical." On the other hand, Slessor's argument about "Air Control" is very provocative. Surely it indicates the direction which must be taken in military planning if the West—and the East—expects to survive.

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A Reckoning with My Readers

"YOU, MY READER, AND I ARE BOTH LISTENING TOGETHER TO WHAT IS CALLED 'THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE,' AND IN THIS SECRET SHARING WE ARE CONTEMPORARIES"

ELISABETH LANGGAESSER

Elisabeth Langgaesser, who died in 1950 at the age of fifty-one, was one of the greatest of contemporary German novelists. In a Commonweal article published the year of Miss Langgaesser's death, Clara Menck compared her work to that of Bernanos, and her literary influence in Germany to that of Joyce in the English-speaking world. "She wanted to make us conscious of the powers existing outside time and space. . . . Elisabeth Langgaesser herself saw the foundation of her art in the liturgical movement of Maria Laach and Beuron."

The following is from her collected letters, Soviel Berauschende Vergaenglichkeit, *published in Hamburg by Claassen Verlag GMBH. It has been translated by Anne Fremantle.*

August 19, 1949; Rheinzabern

MY dear Readers: Please don't think that when I try to picture you I imagine you as a kind of neutral glomerate aggregate, a collective entity with or without spectacles, crouched over a book. No, I envisage you as you really are. I mean you, as God made you, blond or brown, male or female, more or less friendly, more or less bright. Although I have not met you personally, I have—what a paradox—written for you alone, only for you. And although in every word I was wrestling alone with my demon, yet I need you, dear reader, as a woman needs her mirror. Sometimes my mirror is clear and reflects back my conception, as a dewdrop mirrors back the morning sun. Often it is clouded by threatening storms or fogged, so that it has to be breathed upon and rubbed, in order to be cleared. But my mirror is always before me, and always it hangs upon the wall, and I do not question it from vanity or pride, as Snow White's stepmother did.

Today I take my mirror once more into my hand, and also into my heart, for there is much that we have to talk over together, you, my readers, and I, your author. And what we have to discuss are real, personal, purely human problems, which, taken out of the context of my writing, are experienced by you; which you know I experience. For during our long association I have come to know you; I have met you from one end of the country to the other, in the industrial centers as in the quiet country towns. And I have stood helpless before you, a Hydra eager to eat me, with a hundred faces. But the Hydra always dissolved into many single faces, into single men, human beings, single souls, with their questions and their wishes, their warnings or their encouragements, their assent or dissent, their love or their hate. You never spared me, dear reader, and you gave me a lot to swallow, sweet and bitter, but mostly bitter. Even when you reacted anonymously or at third-hand, when you had never read me "but had authority for what you wrote," as you put it, you cleared my mirror for me, so that I saw into it ever deeper and deeper. But with each secret reserve of strength, with every interpretation of character, the mirror polished itself all over again, and once more became as bright as ever it was.

Sweet and bitter both you offered me, whether you wore the habit of a monk or the jacket of a sportsman; you laughed at me, in the guise of a young girl, you laughed and made me blush. If a Professor, you have got on my nerves and made me sick at heart. As a Protestant you have tried my pen and made me aware of many things of which I had no inkling; as a Catholic priest, you have companioned me with your prayers; as artist or actor you have exchanged ideas with me; in times of crisis you have confided in me. Almost always, however, you have forced me to revise my own opinion of myself, for you have given me, through an awareness perhaps stronger because sieved through each book and its objectivity, the personal impression that we—you, my reader, and I—are both listening together to what is called "the spirit of the age," and that in this secret sharing we are contemporaries.

PERHAPS you were not fully conscious of this feeling, for often you were much younger than I, or often, much older. But young or old, through this spirit of the age to which we both hearkened, we have come to understand one another, and finally

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I have learnt what it is that you want of me. Yet it was only slowly, and with great difficulty, that I have come to understand what you really require of me. And by question and answer, trial and error, I have experienced the weight of the past, experienced how slight the likelihood of arriving at the facts of the case. For it is dangerous to find things comprehensible; the difficulty of contact is great, and so is the difficulty of prying open with understanding those things which can only be wholly comprehended by feeling and will.

This state of affairs, let me point out, is the essence of the Christian situation, its very heart's blood. I am infinitely challenged, as is every artist, by the form of expression through which work is to be transformed into art, word into poetry. Yet were the content to require it, I would not hesitate to break the form. It is this dynamic existential which must continually be ratified, to which I seek to give a form which completely expresses it, an enclosed, fleeting form, which is completely opposed to the ancient classical art forms and to ancient views of reality. This, perhaps, will help you to see that it is not caprice nor an appetite for novelty which forces upon you my difficult form of expression, deliberately seeking to make things difficult for you, extracting from you the ultimate in good will, concentration and collaboration.

Yes, and how often it also requires from you courage and a very personal kind of fearlessness. How often have you asked me why my work has to be cast in such an abstruse, unusual, 'contemporary' form? The gods of the West, that is, the old forces, are all called by their right names, their given names; why then must I block the approaches to my thought with my clutter, like a dark restaurant garden with chairs and musical instruments? Why can't I be simple and approachable; why not at least occasionally poetic, like Longfellow, or limpid, like Frost? I am afraid I will not make myself any easier to understand if I tell you that all of us have become more complex, that is, more conscious that we are challenged by the simultaneity of things; that the similarity of the fate of all the European peoples is what concerns us, the forging of a common language based on knowledge and on the faster and more precise transmission of common experience. Negatively expressed, we no longer live in colonial style in Jeffersonian mansions, waited upon by servants; we cannot travel in postchaises without passports to the land where the lemons bloom.

No, what I now emphatically declare is not 'poetic' in a bourgeois sense, and has no time for daydreams nor space for unheard melodies. But what, actually, can be truly poetic without some misunderstanding? All poetry is an *arcanum*, a mystery, something man cannot detach from the background of his own time.

This poetry, purely as an aesthetic principle, not as content, is the same in all the very different artists of our time and can be found in James Joyce as in Graham Greene, in Picasso as in Matisse, in Thomas Mann as in Thornton Wilder, in Schoenberg as in Hindemith. But it is not present, at least in my opinion, in Raphael or Gustav Mahler, in Bellini or in the Decameron: that is to say, in works whose importance for their own time is below the level of the general public—that vague, variable, but still valid, gauge.

COULD *you* tell me the common denominator between all these different names? Is it important for you, dear reader, that you can give a reason for what touched you in an abstraction? Be courageous enough to resign yourself and don't be afraid to concede that you know nothing because in the technique of writing there is a know-how, and an *expertise*, exactly as for the dressmaker or the tailor, without which you are either a charlatan or a chatterer. This *expertise* has precious little in common with the reading and writing you learnt at school. For you there is only one imperative—to have an order of precedence in spiritual values: *ama, et fac quod vis*. Christendom lies athwart this world of art and aesthetics and literature; it both transverses and transcends it, and it exceeds all realms but its own. It is its own center, just as the Bible is the most peculiar and the most essential of all books, the book that has no yardstick but itself, and is, per se, self-sufficient. If you know Stefan Zweig and Heinrich Mann you know nothing; if you know Goethe, you know more. But even to have read Goethe is less than to know the least of the prophets, or that song of the three young men who still speak from today's furnaces, or the tale of Balaam's ass, that knew more than the prophet.

For you constantly show me that you know little or nothing of the Scriptures. If you argue, you generally get your arguments from Nietzsche. The word "humanism" runs out of your mouth like the web out of a spider's—which she then climbs. You think you can pull yourself out of the fountain by the hairs of your own head, and you forget that before anyone can help you, first your head with its cackling beak—as in the fairytale of the ducks—must be cut off by a stroke of the sword. Often, when I thought I was writing either to a complete Christian or to a complete pagan, I found to my horror that I was addressing a chimera, a mishmash, cross-pollinated, like a centaur, demi-Christian or demi-pagan, a semi-pelagian, who didn't care whether he grafts humanism (that is, a belief in the goodness of human nature) upon man's fallen reality, or God's grace upon the sacred Goethe. Indeed, I would put it even more strongly: to my

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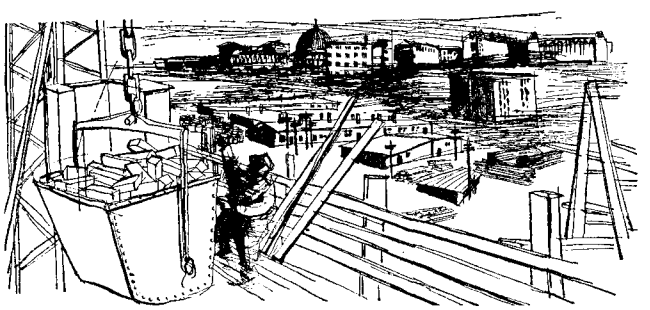
horror I have met neither Christians nor pagans, only well-educated bourgeois from Philosopher's Lane, each one of them a nasty, odious fruit of the Enlightenment, which misinterprets both the classic and the Christian.

Now at this point all possibility of an understanding ends. And I hate to say it, but where civilization and culture are at home, there, through a softening of all concepts, the infiltration of evil occurs, and is provided with a greater material assistance than the *theories* of materialism give. To such an infiltration of evil belongs the name of that millstone which one would like to see tied around the neck of the teachers who seduce youth, the naive innocents who unwittingly sanction adultery, envy, idolatry, greed, lying—all the deadly sins—and are ready to call them good so long as they are draped in the classic folds of beauty, so long as the sinners know how to behave at parties.

Seriously, when did it occur to us Christians to align the Fathers of the Church in a parallel with the German idealist poets? I feel that you are distinctly puzzled by this question, even perhaps a little hurt. You have a right to be because if we ask this question simply, without snobbishness, it must be clear that one result is that we have today a different vision of man than the one conjured by such names as Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Holderlin and Kleist. Don't get panicky—you will remain a Western man, even although you know that there were such men as Buddha, Laotse or Confucius. And because you are a European, you should bring to these the libation of myrrh, of the pitcher of wine and of the love of



the heart, and you must not forget that you belong to their family. But do not forget either, my friend, that for you too, as for every man that is born into the world, the first commandment of the decalogue is paramount: "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before Me; thou shalt not make unto thyself a graven thing."

No strange gods, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And no image except that of the Son of Man to Whom your image of the ideal is referred, and upon Whom it is inflicted. Here, finally, we have arrived at the central point that I want to make in this long reckoning that is the form this, my letter to you, takes. It is here that the essence of man is defined by sin and by grace, by the fallen nature of Adam and by redemption through Christ, through the God of the Mysteries, Who is man's hope of eternal life, Who died for the sins of the whole world.

IF you are willing to go along with me on these presuppositions, then the last and greatest of our misunderstandings will be carried away upon the winds like a dandelion seed. This is the misunderstanding which made you always ask me whether it was really necessary to present sin in all its totality, its roundness, its plenitude, in all the devilish glory of the pride of life, of the lust of the eyes. Let me suppose that you asked me because you were honestly worried, worried on behalf of that same youth whom I wanted to protect from the millstone of the infiltration of evil. I will assume that you believe that you know more about the charm of evil than does youth. Let me further suppose that you were not moved to censor me by an unconscious resentment, nor were your frequent and blunt attacks upon me caused by some deepseated, unrecognized antagonism. Since your question is actually right and proper, and is deeply rooted in the nature of the baptized, my answer will not be a frivolous one.

Do you remember a magnificent scene in Graham Greene where the martyrdom of a priest is going on, and a mother reads to her listening children pious platitudes from a saccharine book of saints' stories? One boy is terribly bored, and he despises the false tone of this reading, because in his heart he is aware of the stupidity and falsehood of this writing. In hagiographies of such a kind, it is in fact a basic premise that grace perfects nature, and that although grace comes to nature's rescue, the sting is still present, there in the redeemed flesh. But it is also true that the flesh too is touched by grace. Flesh and sting belong indissolubly together in order to make a complete Christian. Each human holiness is in spite of ourselves, a violence by which the Incarnation of Christ is wrested from our unwilling flesh. And every fall into sin, however grave, has in itself an inherent possibility of becoming an occasion for sanctity. Only through this new attitude in which faith in Christ's help is accompanied by the simultaneous knowledge of the sting in our flesh which can never be sloughed (as a snake's skin is sloughed) even by the saints, which can never be negated, can the work of grace which nature completes also find its fulfillment in the work of art. For the total reality of a Christian, Christ belongs as does the devil, both belong to it, and youth is always aware of this.

Companioned then by them both, the Christian

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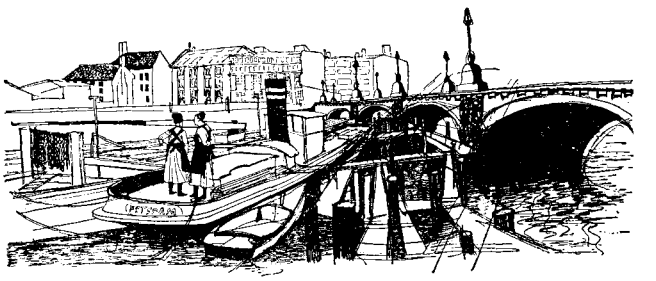
experiences the presence both of the meaning of the Redemption and of the downward drag which is offered by every evil that surrounds us as a roaring lion, seeking whom it may devour. This roaring sometimes sounds like the song of the sirens, sometimes like the fearful voice of the Prince of this World. There is no single poem in which it does not sound or which is opaque to it. To distinguish which is the voice of the Divine Savior and which is the voice of evil speaking to mankind has at all times been the deep and terrible agony of the saints, whether *Don Bosco or Teresa or the Curé d'Ars. This is the* place where prayer and general supplication of all for all has its place in Christian poetry; this is the touchstone by which a man recognizes it.

Should the artist and the poet minimize that because of which Christ died? Should he belittle sin, treat it is unimportant—*quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem*—and thus prevent his own advance? Or should the poet minimize his own power, his artistic 'know-how' and proffer it only in drops, like a medicinal dose?

THERE is still something more that I must state, without which we will never understand each other. The poet is bound to his own person, to his own individuality, just as the whole wide world is bound by gold chains about the feet of God. He is so bound by his Creator, who made him thus, unmistakable and unchangeable, unique, always identifiable. When the poet is articulated in his function, when he 'finds himself,' as they say, in his work, then he discovers himself not only in a formal aesthetic, but he also discovers his art as content and as witness. His way of expression, his degree of intensity, that is himself. His view of life is a process, like creation, which for a second time lifts the world out of non-being, and out of the water of chaos.

Can you argue with this image of the Creator, cavil at how he distributes light and darkness, at how he allocates the good potatoes and the useless, but lovely, orchids? No one wishes to affirm that this is the best of all worlds, but would you, dear reader, be able to make an entirely better one? Above all, if you change one sentence, one comma, one semi-colon, you change the total structure of what we call a work of art, and by so doing you unwittingly release a field of forces.

Only God Himself is freedom; man is bound. Because he is bound as a whole, he is bound also in each of his movements, his rhythm, his handwriting, his walk. Upon which level other than his own should the artist, who is so totally bound, create? On which plane should the poet level off? On which aesthetic, on which theological or intellectual plateau should he maintain himself? For whom does the poet write? For Babbitt or Saint Thomas? For professors and scholars? For women's clubs? Or AMDG? For older adolescents? For veterans? For DP's? For bobbysoxers? For factory workers? The poet addresses mankind. His problems are of human, and not sociological, import; his solutions are intuitive, not systematic. Often he is threatened by the reader's distaste and often by the Index in Rome. Between the Scylla of praise and the Charybdis of blame he sails in his paper boat like some undiscouraged Ulysses.



If he succeeds, he is as delighted as a child and so is his publisher. Discouragement is no stranger to him, neither is despair. But above all, irremediable, constant loneliness is his companion. In this loneliness he sometime thinks of one of his readers, a sister or mother, or some missionary at the end of the world, or a young and famished student, or a soldier just back from Korea, or perhaps that Protestant pastor who locked his church against his people until they begged him from their hearts for baptism and for Communion. Looking at such readers, the poet feels himself refreshed in spite of his melancholy, and he finishes his sentence. Looking at such a reader, and at the Mother of God, who prefers to appear to children, fools, poor students and shepherdesses whom the world despises, the poet puts down what he has to say.

SONNET

LET us forget the horn's end of the year,
Orion marching inconclusively,
out-heroded of individual fear,
recall Odysseus apprised of Circe,
a name that burns. O Christ, we who relied
on quiet heaven and revengeless water
shall, like the friend of Dante, have descried
a strand unknown to Vergil, naked water,
as salt upon our exile as the world.
(Turn backward, Alice. Is the queen in tears?)
The mirrored senses separately curled
cannot reverse the circumscriptive years.
How should the Will we fail abstractly win
sevens of light for us except for sin?

CAROL JOHNSON.

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THE STAGE

THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR

THE Irish Mr. Walter Macken and the American Mr. Robert Anderson are severally concerned with the inbred miseries of the family relationship and their conclusions—grayly set forth in a prose of congealed factuality—are presently disheartening the town. Mr. Macken's "Home is the Hero" (*at the Booth*) happily suggests, on occasion, the possible treasures as well as wounds of that state: a correct and admirable stroke of moral redress by a member of that race whose domestic life has become, in the purest sense, an international scandal. But in the main, the prospect before us darkens: Mr. Macken finds solace only in a symbolic and actual exile of the father, while Mr. Anderson—having chronicled the spiritual attritions of his midwestern species—permits them to be cruelly routed by nature from the seat of whatever common pieties they share.

Mr. Macken plays the ironic title role of "Home is the Hero:" that of a charming bully who has been imprisoned for manslaughter, and who returns home with all his (however spurious) warmth and wit extinguished, and only a cold moral terrorism left. The play is designed to expose him in a series of depressing familial postures (with wife, with son, with daughter) and these exacerbated encounters finally dull and fatigue one's spirit. Indeed, I cannot recall a serious middle-class drama which shows such an intolerable resistance to simple pleasure, or one which so studiously unravels the knotted thread of its suffering. Mr. Worthington Miner's direction nowhere clarifies the dramatic shapelessness of the piece, and Mr. Macken himself gives a performance curiously thick and sluggish. For so competent a cast, too, there is little of the real stuff of acting here: alternately poignant or amusing illustrations of temperament, surely, but nothing sustained, spontaneous or creative. It is possible to discern dimly in the emotional distress of "Home is the Hero" a commentary on the shifting social face of Ireland, but the work never exceeds its insular limitations. I would imagine, also, that the lyricism of Irish speech might lighten the density of Mr. Macken's language, but as the variety of hastily assumed brogues at the Booth proved, this is not to be had by taking thought.

Mr. Anderson has fashioned "All Summer Long" (*at the Coronet*) out of Mr. Donald Wetzel's novel *A Wreath and a Curse*. In time, the play precedes "Tea and Sympathy," and also in value—altogether this is a slighter piece of work, less secure of its effects and achievements. Mr. Anderson has lit it with the (now) conventional chiaroscuro of sensibility. Life flickers on an indolent summer afternoon; an adolescent boy nuzzles the fringe of the adult world and finds it ashes in his mouth; the ego is permanently fixed in a tragedy of cross-purposes, and the undeveloped heart withers.

I cannot account for the diffidence of my response to "All Summer Long" but by calling into question the nature of Mr. Anderson's conception of reality. It is something fragile and tentative, a scrim of sensibility; it pervades the play with a hot and oppressive breath. Mr. Jo Mielziner conspires in the illusion with a curtain of rippling water, and a vaporous musical score softly undercuts the action. Yet the play—stripped of these embellishments—is nakedly plain and commonplace. One is moved then to ask: has not the evocation of the "poetic" ambiance become a mechanical strategy, an evasion? Is, perhaps, the actuality of this kind of play so fragile and deliquescent precisely because so little of reality itself has been tangibly grasped?

What Mr. Macken and Mr. Anderson have revealed in their plays—perhaps unconsciously—is the pallor of the contemporary domestic interior, and the dwindling power of the searchlight drama has traditionally thrown into it. For of the larger issues of family life (one may as well say life), of its great crises of spirit, they show rarely a trace. What this suggests about the quality of our national experience (possibly international) is disturbing, but we are not concerned with that here. We note merely the dramatic fact: that the reverberations of that door slammed by Nora in "A Doll's House" have sadly declined; that a moral shot once heard round the world has died away to a paltry and conventional sigh of discontent.

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

HOME IS THE STAR

IT isn't just Technicolor or CinemaScope or beautifully staged production numbers that make "A Star Is Born" such a fine movie. They help; but what really count are the fascinating story and the performances of the two leading players who give life and vitality to carefully conceived roles. Those who saw the 1937 version of "A Star Is Born" know it is a tale of heartbreak in Hollywood with emphasis on a young woman who is molded into an actress by a fading actor. Through his efforts she rises to the top while he sinks to the bottom.

The new version, which is a musical, has a well-written script by Moss Hart which follows the old theme (originally based on a story by William A. Wellman and Robert Carson) brought up to date

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in modern Hollywood and decorated with the screen's new techniques. The picture is a personal triumph for Judy Garland whose return to the screen after four years deserves rousing cheers. And so does her performance as the young singer; when she does her songs—the new ones like "The Man Who Got Away," which is the film's theme song, and "Born in a Trunk," which has autobiographical connotations, or the old ones like "Swanee" and "You Took Advantage of Me"—you recognize at once that which makes Judy a star. That James Mason, who plays her mentor, seems to outshine her in the dramatic scenes must be attributed both to the role (do you remember Fredric March as this drunkard who can't stand not being top man?) and to Mason's talents as an actor. He plays his best role to the hilt.

The picture jerks many a tear but it never wallows in sentiment. It paints this man as a heel, even at the height of his career. His only kindness is to this woman he believes in, but even for her he cannot straighten himself out. She has cause to be bitter and unhappy. "You don't know what it's like to watch him break down bit by bit. I hate him for failing and I hate myself too—for not helping him. All he has left is his pride."

Contrasted with the scenes of despair are the picture's lighter moments and rousing production numbers. Some of these get a touch corny in the Pagliacci vein, but one, in which Judy to cheer up her embittered husband tells him about the day's events at the studio by parodying the song-and-dance schemes of her latest movie, is a highlight of "A Star Is Born." And the picture doesn't forget to tell off Hollywood, particularly its publicity departments. Jack Carson, as this studio's publicity director, plays one of the nastiest guys ever to turn up in an exposé of the world's film capital.

Sidney Luft deserves applause for his handsome production of "A Star Is Born," and so does George Cukor for his direction of the large cast. But perhaps what you'll remember longest after all the fanfare of this tremendous picture is over is its touching story of two people trying to help each other and failing.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

TWO POEMS ABOUT WAR

WE WHO LIVED IN THAT DAY

WE who lived in that day, who heard the grave voices,
who listened to the words: Bataan, Corregidor,
the varying pronunciation: Spanish, American,

Guadal or Guathal: the strange syllables
Buna, Gona: the flat main street sound
of Henderson Field: the autumn football sound.

We who saw the pictures: the foxholes, the blasted trees
the wash of dead bodies along the shallow beaches,
the curved hand, the boy asleep after fighting.

We who looked into their faces: the smiling lips
the dark eyes less manageable, filled with
the broken nights: the sudden sounds, the silenced voices.

We, who looked on their faces—may never again
drink water free of the taint of the foxholes
never again, the water sweet, unclouded, leached

free of their suffering: must never again: for
only the communal cup, the shared suffering is
pure: can assuage, is dipped from the living water.

SUCH COMRADESHIP AS SHAMES THE DAY

YOU do not cry alone; harken the myriad voices;
your tears are not your own; anguish rises
from the long dead for this day's uses.

No member's wound is singular. No wound
in any part but there were eyes which found
in it the desolation you now find.

Pain has no crevice small enough for you
to fill alone. Its utmost dark will show
such comradeship as shames the day.

They lay in the rye fields through the nights of black frost.
They tunneled in oubliettes, but the stones held fast.
Their women scanned at dusk an empty west.

The rising wind awakened those who slept
alone. It sounded like the wind in Kent or aped
a voice the years had long since stopped.

Rest now in ceaseless comradeship. They know,
oh numberless they know your pain. They cry
beyond the battlements. Their footsteps show the way.

JESSAMYN WEST.

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Toynbee's Odyssey of the West

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

AFTER an interval of fifteen years, many of which were necessarily devoted to the service of the government during the recent war, Dr. Toynbee has brought his *Study of History* to a conclusion with a final instalment of four volumes. Viewed as a whole it is a remarkable achievement, the most massive work that our generation has seen or is likely to see, for it numbers nearly six thousand pages each of which is pregnant with meaning and heavily weighted with erudition. [Oxford. Vol. VII-X, $35.]

It makes heavy demands on the reader, for it presupposes a level of general historical knowledge and a familiarity with the classics, and the classical languages and literatures, that few modern men possess, while the exceptional reader who has these qualifications and can appreciate Lucretius and Rutlius Namatianus without a translation is all the more likely to be taken aback when he is confronted with the problem of Bedreddinism in the Ottoman Empire or "the Frustration of Evyenios Voulgharis."

Moreover, the new volumes are more difficult than their predecessors because they are no longer united by the exposition of a single theme but consist of a number of monographs dealing successively with Universal States and Universal Churches, Heroic Ages, Contacts between Civilizations in Space and Time, Law and Freedom in History, The Prospects of the Western Civilization and the Inspiration of Historians. Nevertheless these treatises, some of which are as long or longer than an ordinary book, are not afterthoughts; they belong to the original plan of the study and are essential for an understanding of the author's philosophy of history.

In studying these concluding volumes the ordinary reader will probably turn first to Part XII which deals with the Prospects of Civilization, but I think he will be making a mistake, for the center of the new volumes is the part which deals with Universal Churches, and it is at this point that Toynbee introduces the new principle which marks a fundamental modification of his earlier views and involves the transformation of his *Study of History* from a relativist phenomenology of equivalent cultures, after the fashion of Spengler, to a unitary philosophy of history comparable to that of the idealist philosophers of the nineteenth century.

This change, which was already foreshadowed in the fifth volume, means the abandonment of Toynbee's original theory of the philosophical equivalence of the civilizations and the introduction of a qualitative principle embodied in the Higher Religions, regarded as representatives of a higher species of society, which stand in the same relation to the civilizations as the latter to the primitive societies.

Thus Toynbee's theory of history ceases to be cyclical, like Spengler's, and becomes a progressive series of four world stages, ascending from primitive societies, through the primary and secondary civilizations to the higher religions in which history finds its ultimate goal. And so the *Study of History* reaches "a point at which the civilizations in their turn, like the parochial states of the Modern Western World at the outset of our investigation, have ceased to constitute intelligible fields of study for us and have forfeited their historical significance except in so far as they minister to the progress of Religion."

THIS is a revolutionary change, and to appreciate its full significance we must study the more elaborate table of civilizations and religions arrayed in serial order in the appendices to the seventh volume which shows the way in which Dr. Toynbee's new theory transforms his original scheme of twenty-one independent equivalent culture cycles. It is arranged in six stages:—

(I) The Primitive Societies which are legion.

(II) The Primary Civilizations which are now seven instead of five owing to the addition of the newly discovered archaic civilizations of the Indus Valley and the Yellow River.

(III) The eight secondary civilizations which are derived from the primary ones.

(IV) The Higher Religions which are apparently twelve in number.

(V) The Eight Tertiary Civilizations of which our own Western Civilization is one.

(VI) The Secondary Higher Religions, a category which includes about a dozen modern, or not

Mr. Dawson is the author of *Progress and Religion, The Judgment of the Nations, The Making of Europe,* and many other works.

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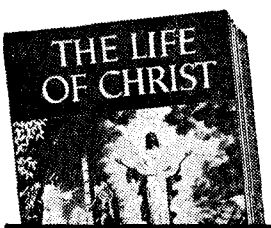

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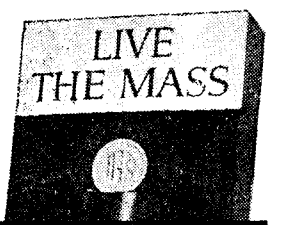

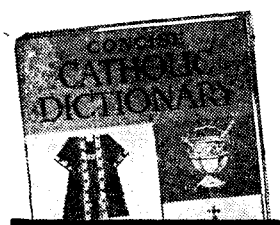

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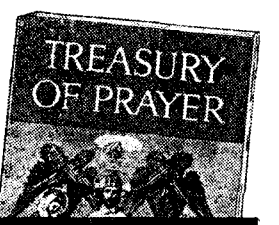

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so modern, religious movements such as Bedreddinism, Bahaiism, the Kabir Panth, the Brahmo Samaj, the Táipíngs, Jodo, Zen and Hokke.

This table is of great importance for Dr. Toynbee's theory, but it is somewhat misleading. If it were taken at its face value, it would seem to suggest that the movement of world history has culminated in a bunch of exotic cults and that we must look to the Bab or to Sheyka Bedr-ed-Din for the last word on man's spiritual destinies. This, however, is not Dr. Toynbee's meaning, though he does not altogether exclude it as a possibility.

It is to the original higher Religions that he looks in the first instance and, among them, to those four which he regards as still living—Mahayana Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. By giving birth to these religions, civilization has fulfilled its purpose and "exhausted its mandate." Henceforth the leading role in history has passed from the Civilization to the Religions and the real problem of the future is whether the four Religions will realize their mission by uniting mankind in a four-part spiritual symphony or whether their mutual antagonisms and intolerance will lead to the loss of their mandate and their supersession by a new world religion of the Secondary type.

This is a paradoxical theory which will commend itself neither to the secular historian nor to the scientific philosopher nor to the orthodox theologian, and Dr. Toynbee accepts at least this third objection insofar as he includes in his notes and appendices a very fair statement of the Christian point of view by Mr. Martin Wight. But in addition to these there are further difficulties which seem inherent in Dr. Toynbee's theory.

In the first place it is difficult to see why he limits his category of Living Religions to four only and why the Mahayana should be regarded as the only living form of Buddhism. There are surely few students of religion who would deny the right of Judaism to be numbered among Living Religions; and when we come to Buddhism, its original Hinayana form is still the living religion of many countries in Eastern Asia, from Ceylon to Thailand and Burma. Indeed it seems considerably more alive in these countries than Mahayana Buddhism is in China.

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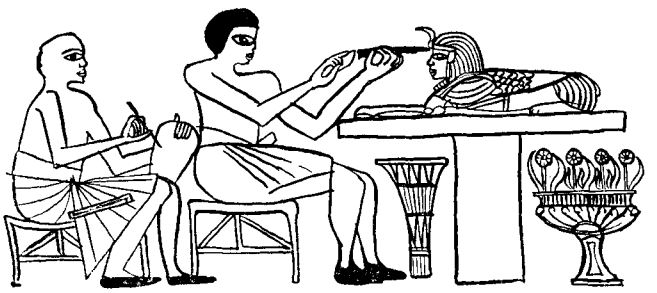
Dr. Toynbee explains his choice on the ground that this earlier Buddhism is not a living religion but only the fossil survivor of the Indic civilization, and in the same way he regards Judaism as a fossil of the Syriac civilization. But whatever sociological truth there may be in this view, it does not provide adequate basis for a religious judgment. If the Torah or the Noble Eight Fold Path are spiritual ways still trodden in faith and devotion by living men, then these are still living religions, however ancient they are and however many traces thev bear of extinct civilizations.

In the second place, while Dr. Toynbee's reclassification of the twenty-one or twenty-three civilizations provides an escape from the historical relativism and fatalism of the cyclical view of history which was so characteristic of Spengler's theory, it does not adequately explain the existence of the modern civilizations. These Tertiary civilizations serve no higher purpose such as the earlier civilizations possessed, so that they are left hanging in the air. In his own words "they are now right out of the picture." Nevertheless I cannot feel that these civilizations are really of less historical significance than Primary civilizations like that of the Maya, or than Secondary ones like the Hittite or the Mexican. Nor does the author himself think so, judging by the amount of space he has devoted to them both in the present volumes and in the earlier two series.

Here one cannot help feeling that Dr. Toynbee is too hard to please. He holds very rightly that civilizations exist to serve religion and not religion to serve civilization. And yet when civilizations, like that of medieval Christendom or Islam, take him at his word



and devote their energies to the service of the Higher Religions as transcendent super-historical ends, he condemns them because they are not Churches.

But what is the alternative? Civilization cannot just "wither away," as Marx believed that the State was destined to do. Nor can the Higher Religions disinterest themselves in the fate of civilization, for if a religion is a reality it must inevitably seek to transform the civilization with which it is in contact according to its ethical values and its spiritual ends. I think Dr. Toynbee's objection to such civilizations

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John Farrow calls this biography "a story of tenderness and violence and tragedy and, above all, a story of courage and example." You might say the same of his first book, *Damien the Leper*, though it strikes us with pleasure that no two holy men could well be more different than Thomas More and Father Damien. It seems to us quite remarkable that the same author should write of each of them so well and with so much understanding. Illus. $3.50

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is that they are obstacles to world unity, but this is really a criticism of the Higher Religions rather than of the civilizations that they may inspire. In his view Christianity and Islam fail by their exclusiveness, and the true pathway to spiritual unity is that of Mahayana Buddhism which accepts the multiplicity and equality of of the different roads that lead to spiritual reality. Thus his original principle of the philosophic equivalence of the Civilizations is replaced by the principle of the theological equivalence of the Higher Religions.

THIS is a difficult procedure alike for the historian and theologian. Mahayana Buddhism, like Hinduism, achieves its synthesis by abandoning the historical world altogether and taking refuge in a dreamland of cosmological and metaphysical fantasy, in which the features of the historical Buddha, Gautama, and his historic teaching, are hidden by a whole pantheon of mythical Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and minor divinities and by a library of apocryphal scriptures. The three higher religions of the West, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, on the other hand, have followed quite a different path. Their very existence is bound up with the historic reality of their founders, and with the establishment of a unique relation between the one God and His people. Thus any syncretism between religions of these two different types would inevitably mean the abdication of the monotheistic religions and their absorption by the pantheistic or polytheistic ones.

Such a process is not inconceivable, but we have no historical reason to suppose that it is possible and no theological reason for supposing it to be desirable or right. Hitherto the main trend of history has been in the opposite direction and the exclusive monotheistic religions have been steadily extending their spheres of influence at the expense of their more accommodating rivals. It is true that Toynbee's Secondary Higher Religions are mostly of the syncretistic type, but, with the exception of Sikhism, they have failed to establish themselves, and the success of Sikhism was military and political rather than purely religious.

Hence it seems that the principle of the theological equivalence of the higher religions finds no more justification in the study of history than the philosophical equivalence of civilizations has done. With regard to the latter, Dr. Toynbee has now come to accept the qualitative differentiation of cultures according to their degree of subordination to higher spiritual ends, and in spite of his scepticism regarding the spiritual *raison d'etre* of Western Civilization, he admits the startling fact that this is now the only extant representative of the species which is not in process of disintegration. Though it is by no means certain that our civilization possesses either the strength or the wisdom to create a peaceful world order, it is

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difficult to see how its work can ever be altogether undone, except by the destruction of civilization itself.

Now as Western civilization has been the effective agent of World unity on the material, technological and economic planes, so Christianity has worked for nearly two-thousand years towards the spiritual unification of humanity in the Kingdom of God. If Christianity fails we have no reason to suppose that it will be replaced by an oriental syncretism like Mahayana Buddhism or by a Christian Gnosticism. Its only effective rival is a secular counter-religion like Communism, which would mean the destruction of all the Higher Religions.

Nevertheless, however strongly we dissent from Dr. Toynbee's theological views, we can agree fully with him in his conclusion that the vital problem that confronts Western Civilization today is to prevent the modern secularized world empires from destroying one another, and humanity with them, and to bring back civilization to an awareness of its true function as a means to a higher end, as a bridge builder and a road maker, an interpreter and a peacemaker, preparing the way for spiritual unity.

TWO APPEALS

Father Francis Gevers, P.O. Box 55, Baguio City, The Philippines, is organizing a number of CYO groups in that community of 23,000 souls. He needs funds for playgrounds and primarily to build a recreation center, as the rainy season lasts for four months a year. His charges are religiously underprivileged and most of these children derive little moral sustenance from their family life. Education itself is overwhelmingly secularized. Because of the scarcity of native priests "there is no provision for Mass for nine out of every ten of the eighteen million Catholics in the Philippines." Juvenile delinquency is rife and Father Gevers finds that he must start with his large Catholic Youth groups from the ground up. He believes that to share in this work is an extremely sound way of contributing to the building of a new world.

Father Protasio Soares, c/o Our Lady of the Angels Rectory, 221 Kilburn St., Fall River, Mass., is collecting funds in this country for the native mission society of St. Francis Xavier (Pillar, Goa-India). The society needs funds to complete the construction of its seminary for 125 students; it also needs a printing press. All this is of key importance because of increasing anti-Caucasian feeling in the Orient and the multiplied difficulties being encountered by American and European missionaries in India and other countries in the Far East. Father Soares expects to be in Fall River until the middle of next month.

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The Catholic Lessons to be Learned from the Past

POLITICS OF BELIEF IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FRANCE. By Philip Spencer. Grove Press. $6.

By ERWIN W. GEISSMAN

ONE of the knottiest problems confronting the student of Catholic culture is the necessity of drawing sharp intellectual distinctions between the Mystical Body of Christ on the one hand and the ever-changing fabric of the Catholic community on the other. In theory the distinction is clear; in practice what is essentially Catholic is frequently confused with the infinitely complex accidents of the contingent order.

Catholicism is a total commitment, and the more completely a man accepts the totality of the commitment the greater danger he runs of seeing his own every thought and action as uniquely Catholic. The pathetic consequence is that for many sincere Catholics their very sincerity can lead them into uncharitable misunderstandings. And the bitter fruit of this is that the Christian message is debased to the level of the operational postulate, the political positions and social attitudes which have their meaning only in a very restricted portion of human time.

Sociologically speaking, one may better inform himself here by considering the varied culture patterns assumed by Catholic life throughout the world. But the best corrective exercise is still the study of the history, ecclesiastical and secular, of the entire Christian era. The nineteenth century is an especially instructive period because many of the problems of political and social adaptation which still beset the Catholic community today had their origin in the aftermath of the major European revolutionary movements. Philip Spencer's book, *Politics of Belief in Nineteenth Century France,* directs attention to such problems.

The official French Catholic position, emanating from the higher clergy, was Gallican in ecclesiology and monarchic in politics. Catholics who saw no Catholic commitment to the Bourbons, or who looked to Rome instead of Paris as the true center of the Church, found themselves rebels and outcasts. Lamennais' personal tragedy was rooted in pride, but his intellectual tragedy grew out of an atmosphere in which "Catholic" politics frequently triumphed over Catholic faith.

The non-Catholic liberal is always tempted to see in the Roman foundation, whether in religious orders or in the Church as a whole, an example of Catholic taste in autocracy. The truth is that more often than not it has been the Roman foundation which stood as a disciplinary bulwark against the tyranny of local bishops and superiors. Today even the word *ultramontane* sounds archaic, precisely because today we are all ultramontanists. A century ago French Catholic leaders fought against ultramontanism and they fought as Catholics in a Catholic cause. It is the constant pitfall of the Catholic community: to call all its causes Catholic and to excommunicate all its enemies.

It is a fascinating story and Mr. Spencer tells it well. He tells it, however, from a modern and somewhat skeptical point of view. While Lacordaire is presented sympathetically, Jandel is barely mentioned, and then with the implication that the Dominicans went wrong when they went the way of Jandel rather than of Lacordaire. But there never was a Lacordaire way. Religious orders exist not to provide a refuge for individual men of genius but to do the work of Christ with men who rarely are geniuses and who sometimes are stupid and perverse. Jandel was a great organizer at a time when organization and reform were needed. With Lacordaire as shepherd there would soon have been no sheep.

It is difficult to see why Spencer gives so much space to poor Michon. His was a highly individual case, an erratic man who could hardly have found peace under any ecclesiastical regimen. But Veuillot's story is still worth retelling. Here was perhaps the most influential Catholic journalist of all time, a learned, arrogant, brilliant fanatic who set the tone for much of Catholic journalism from his time to our own. He had the power of the word and his indignant ridicule still retains its sting. He stands as a typical victim of the easy confusion of the Catholic community with the Catholic Church. Secure in his own faith, he saw atheism and heresy behind anyone who disagreed with him on anything. How many of his brothers today mark Catholic journalism with the pettiness and arrogance of old Veuillot, but alas! without the learning or the skill.

Spencer exhibits a constant suspiciousness of human motives. This is probably most apparent in his inability to think any good of Pius IX. Some of his statements are easily corrigible in the light of Aubert's recent *Le Pontificat de Pie IX* in the Fliche-Martin *Histoire de l'Eglise.* Aubert does not gloss over the Pope's defects but he emphasizes the remarkable achievements of one of the major pontificates in the history of the Church. One interesting illustration of the differences a point of view can make in interpreting the same data is provided by Spencer's citing of the remark attributed to Pius IX, "I am tradition," as an indication of the height of the Pope's arrogance. Tradition to the Catholic is not a dead historical record. It is a dynamic force, the living message of the *ecclesia docens.* It is awkward but not inaccurate to say that the Pope is tradition.

We are too prone to believe in clichés such as that history repeats itself. But we can learn lessons from the past; indeed we have little else to learn them from. An understanding of the confusion of the past can certainly be of service to us if we are to distinguish between what is Catholic and what is merely selfish and silly in the messages which pour forth from the noisiest quarters of the Catholic community today.

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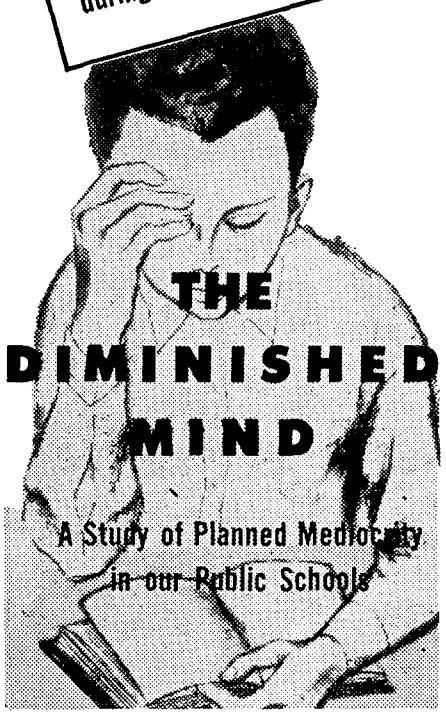

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Serious Frivolity

THE LOVE-LETTERS OF PHYLLIS McGINLEY. Viking. $3.

By ANNE FREMANTLE

THE best evidence of vitality is variety, just as the only evidence of life is warmth. It is an excellent thing that a nation should have, at any given moment, a major poet; it is even better, and much more indicative of its cultural health, that it should have many coveys of good minor poets, gay and grave, satirists, mystics, mockers, shockers, writers of lyrics and verse, as well as of epics and tragedies. That a nation is in spate of poets should delight any true patriot as much as a red sky at night gives joy to a good shepherd.

America—and that includes the whole continent, and all four of that continents' major languages—is in that happy position today. Its harvest of poets established, famous and middle-aged is satisfactory, and a nice crop of young ones is coming along.

Among the younger poets who are rapidly reaching a major status is Phyllis McGinley. She never writes less well than her best, and this is her seventh book. In each she has combined a frivolous manner with serious intent. She is utterly feminine, in that she conceals both her profound talent and her deep concern under a felicity of phrase as light as puff-pastry. Caroline Tate has said that the only thing that matters about a woman's education is that it should be surreptitious, and one of the peculiar talents of Phyllis McGinley is to give a perfect (and perfectly correct) impression of complete fulfillment as a woman. Here is someone who enjoys her daughters, her petticoats, her prettiness—while yet conveying, to all who read between the lines, the "divine discontent," the profound, inner dissatisfaction that is the trademark of the proper poet.

There are no complexes here; this polished successful verse is not ersatz for lost lover or mourned youth. Yet throughout, the poetry is, as Wilfred Owen said it must be, "in the pity" and the whole

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human condition is envisaged with compassion and courage by one totally committed as a human being.

Miss McGinley views herself and her world with delicate irony and amused affection, seeing the faults and flaws in herself (why must I talk so much at parties?), in her children—the tender and touching "Ballade of Lost Objects" brings this out beautifully, in the company she keeps, in the Old and the Great, in her friends and in her foes. But she touches everything tenderly, almost strokingly, for she is aware not only of the "tears of things" but also of their infinite fragility.

"Beauty vanishes, beauty passes, however rare, rare it be," and "dust lies on Helen's eyes." Phyllis McGinley not only makes us once again aware of these supreme facts, with every line she writes, but even helps us rejoice, albeit a little wryly, that it is so.

She writes:

"Neither my friends, nor quite my foes
Alien, beautiful, stern and clannish . . . . .
These are my daughters, I suppose,
But where in the world did the children vanish?"

and her longest poem, the Phi Beta Kappa poem for the 1953 Commencement at Columbia, praises diversity "which holds the world upon its center" and bids us remember:

"Along the way, that even God
Is said to be three separate persons
Then upright or upon the knee
Praise Him that by His courtesy
For all our prejudice and pains
Diverse His creature still remains."

But she is no saccharine sweet female, patting the world and seeing it through a veil of blue or pink tears. She can denounce the Old Philanthropist, whose:

millions make museums bright
Harvard anticipates his will
While his young typist weeps at night
Over a druggist's bill

or the Old Radical, now kept warm by Hate alone; or castigate Bloomingdales for selling larks tongues as a delicacy. And she can pen a neat epigram, with an aftertaste as bitter as the Chinese description of the golden persimmon:

Sticks and stones are hard on bones
Aimed with angry art
Words can sting like anything
But silence breaks the heart.

Perhaps the best gauge of any civilization is its poets—and when they are adult, then one can begin to hope that their culture, and their country, has grown up.

To the Invisible

THE GOLDEN ANGEL: Papers on Proust. By Elliott Coleman. Coley Taylor. $3.50.

By WALLACE FOWLIE

THE blurb on the jacket of Professor Coleman's book, designed to indicate the central thesis, "Proust, as Christian—and Catholic—artist," is far more blatant than

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any claims made within the text itself. It is, therefore, somewhat misleading. The subtitle of the book, "Papers on Proust," is over-modest, because the eight chapters are all concerned with the spiritual meaning of Proust's novel, with evidences of his religious sensitivity, with an effort to show "that Proust is more Christian than anything else." The book is subtly and delicately conceived, and no revolutionary thesis is put forward. Elliott Coleman refers to other critics who have been concerned with the spiritual aspect of Proust's work: Georges Poulet in *Etudes sur le temps humain,* and Georges Cattaui in *L'Amitié de Proust.* To these might be added Henri Bonnet's two volume work on *Le Progrès Spirituel dans l'oeuvre de Marcel Proust.*

Marcel Proust made his first Communion in the Catholic Church at the age of twelve. He always claimed to be a Catholic. But he is far from being a religious writer in any strict sense. Mr. Coleman is quite justified, however, in stressing Proust's great sensitivity to religious symbols and architecture. The title of his book comes from a passage in *Albertine Disparue,* where Marcel, in Venice, looks out from his room in the morning and sees ablaze in the sunlight the Golden Angel on the towering campanile of San Marco. Each of the "papers" comprising this study, is an analysis of themes which contain the abiding symbols of the novel and which bear, on a conscious or unconscious level, a religious significance. The Three Spires of Martinville and The Three Trees near Balbec; the white hawthorn blossoms in the month of May; the books of Bergotte which, at his death, "arranged three by three kept watch like angels with outspread wings." Mr. Coleman has written these interpretations with full awareness of other possible keys to the symbols and with full knowledge of Proust's only partial approximations in many instances to Christian doctrine. A mark of Proust's greatness is the kind of total revelation the reading of his book can make. The revelation of a spiritual order which Mr. Coleman discusses in his highly suggestive "papers," is far different from the revelations made to Massis in earlier years, who found no spiritual preoccupations in Proust, and to Fernandez who found no spiritual progress and no hierarchy of values in the novel. Mr. Coleman has made a contribution to the new and prevailing approach to the study of Proust. It is an effort to understand the underlying constructiveness of the work which may have led Proust to the threshold of a spiritual experience. If the French novelist speaks at length of lost time, the entire book is orientated toward recaptured time which gives it its meaning and goal.

Each of the critics who have successively considered the novel of Proust ends by becoming absorbed in the problem of time and the work of art. Time lost is that time which passes without being fixed and made perennial by a work of art. Works of art, formed by time, resist it and borrow from it the most enduring elements of their

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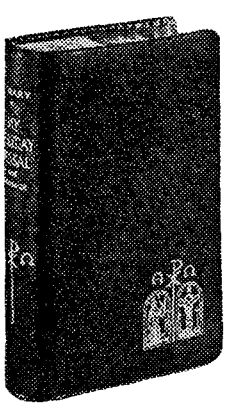

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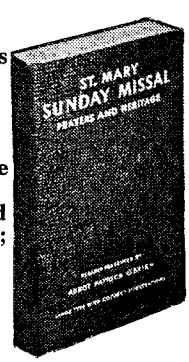

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greatness. Thus they constitute a surpassing of time. When the narrator, in Proust's novel, eats a madeleine cookie, two widely separated periods of his life are juxtaposed, and the intervening time is absorbed. A successful work of art, in like manner, does not permit the ordinary limitations of space and time. This lesson comes to the narrator from the great artists he meets: La Berma, Bergotte, Elstir, Vinteuil. Since Baudelaire and the symbolists of the latter nineteenth century, the notion has grown that poetry in particular and art in general serve not only for aesthetic pleasure but serve also as instruments of discovery and exploration. Proust's novel is far from being a chronicle in the manner of the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon. It is more than a moralist's work, although Proust occupies an eminent place among French moralists. It is one of the gigantic poetic enterprises of the twentieth century, so constituted as to capture the invisible; or at least to open up the way to the invisible.

That Endless Weekend

THE HUGE SEASON. By Wright Morris. Viking. $3.75.

By PATRICK F. QUINN

HUGE? Season? This novel borrows its offkey title from a passage in the *Anabasis* of St. John Perse. Although Mr. Morris quotes the passage before he begins his story, it sheds only a distant and cryptic light. There is one flicker of meaning, however: a huge season is like a lost weekend, extended almost indefinitely, but bound to end sometime. Which suggests that this book might be one more try with the "lost generation" theme. Fortunately, Mr. Morris has spared us another documentary saga on that rather battered topic. He writes instead with economy, edge, and a good deal of macabre humor about how the huge season got under way for some people in the early twenties and how it closed for at least one of them in 1952. Two intervening decades are passed over almost *in toto*—and hardly missed, for there have been quite enough novels about the events of those years, and in any case Mr. Morris establishes his characters so nicely that if he went on at any greater length about them he would only draw a penalty for delaying the game.

He takes enough chances as it is. I have yet to read a novel about college life that succeeded in making the material credible. Perhaps the subject is inherently impossible, too unreal for the purposes of fiction. It happens that a particularly unreal California college is the setting for much of *The Huge Season,* but since Mr. Morris knows how to play up the sunkist implausibility of the place he scores a very good near miss with this dangerous detail. Then there is the novel-within-a-novel technique, an almost unavoidable development in this book since three of its charac-

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ters are or were would-be, part-time novelists, and the story they all wanted to tell is the story Mr. Morris is writing.

So the labor is divided. As we go along we discover that we are reading: (A) chapters from the unfinished manuscript of one Peter Foley, an autobiographical account that gives us the story as seen from the inside by the central character; and (B) alternate chapters *about* Foley, written by Mr. Morris, that complete his story for us from the outside. This procedure gives the novel a flaky *millefeuille* texture since Foley's first-person narration covers a span of ten years or so, whereas Mr. Morris confines himself to describing what happened to his hero on only one day in 1952.

In these and other ways Mr. Morris' writing is like the tennis style of one of Foley's friends, a doomed and dauntless fellow with Davis Cup ambitions, who attempted to volley every shot, even from the baseline. Mr. Morris is a writer with similar verve and bravura. So his story has its interest even when it fails to come off. The ending, for instance, does not carry much conviction. Foley goes through the *motions* of a psychological change, but it seems to me that he is lifted chiefly by his own bootstraps. To give a character a new lease on life in the final pages of a story must be one of the hardest assignments a novelist can face. Both Dickens, at the end of *Great Expectations,* and D. H. Lawrence, at the end of *Sons and Lovers,* found the task too much. So does Mr. Morris, though this shared failure does not accredit him to the company of Dickens and Lawrence. He is good, but not that good.

My impression, shakily based on a reading of only this one novel among the seven Mr. Morris has written, is that he is a novelist on the order of James Gould Cozzens or the late William March—a novelist, that is, with a "big" talent, expertly schooled in the fundamentals, able, original, has technique to burn, writes well and often.

And yet in spite of all this equipment it's touch-and-go whether the books these men have turned out are to be come upon some years hence among the dustier stacks of publishers' remainders or must be tracked down and purchased at a premium from some canny book-dealer whose specialty is the out-of-print market. Either future may lie ahead for *The Huge Season.* But I rather think that Wright Morris will have to crown his career with a more substantial book than this before *The Huge Season,* retroactively, will be much sought after.

Abundance and Outlook

PEOPLE OF PLENTY. By David M. Potter. University of Chicago. $3.50.

By GARY MacEOIN

AMERICANS experience deep frustration when other peoples resist what we have to offer them: our system of democracy tolerant of minorities and dissident opinions, stressing the individual's right to live as he pleases and make money in whatever way he finds most advantageous to himself. Many of us find it hard to treat as reasonable those who refuse to believe that the adoption of our political and social institutions must necessarily usher in for others an era of abundance.

David M. Potter, Coe Professor of American History and Chairman of American Studies at Yale University, thinks this attitude mistaken. We tend to regard democracy, he says in *People of Plenty,* as a system we have developed by superior political wisdom and virtue, instead of recognizing it as a major by-product of our abundance, workable primarily because of the measure of this abundance.

Our fallacious thinking has consistently impelled us to proselytize for converts to our "democratic faith" in places where the economic prerequisites for democracy do not exist. At best we merely succeed in urging people to compete for non-existent prizes, assuring them of

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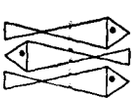

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freedom to go where they wish, when they have nowhere to go.

These criticisms of our international policies develop out of Mr. Potter's study of the American national character, which he regards as shaped by economic abundance. Abundance is partly a physical and partly a cultural manifestation. The physical assets of this country existed when men first set foot here countless centuries ago, but they have been converted into abundance only in the past two hundred years. Other countries have comparable assets but none has ever created an economy of abundance.

We have in consequence a social conditioning different from that of all other peoples, past and present, and the most significant part of Mr. Potter's book is the analysis of the changes caused in the attitudes and motivations of the individual American by the new factors in his environment. Even the infant has a unique set of experiences. His parents are younger than those of other "advanced" societies. His mother's milk is substituted or supplemented by other foods. He sleeps in a separate room. He is kept warm without being wrapped in heavy clothes. Diaper services make possible the postponement of toilet training. At an early age he is launched on the tremendously competitive race which is the corollary of the American freedom to advance, a race which will continue all through life, since the social pressures of a society in which consumption is the main goal tend to identify a full life with the ability to consume spectacularly.

People of Plenty is less concerned with judging our society than with describing its characteristics. This is done with erudition, detachment and a fine sense of perspective. Mr. Potter utilizes both the tools of history and those of the cultural anthropologists, the social psychologists and other students of human behavior. He surveys and criticizes previous attempts to fix the American character, and specifically the classical frontier theory. He also discusses the transformation of the American economy, and consequently of society, from one of production to one of consumption, revealing national advertising as the characteristic institution of a society of abundance. He thinks clearly and expresses himself in polished and precise language. A true artist, he stimulates in the reader at every turn a wealth of ideas reaching far beyond the specific subject under discussion.

Greenwich Village Irish

THE MAGIC MARGIN. By Martin Yoseloff. Dutton. $3.

JOHN A. LYNCH

THE story is about a people: Jude Kelleher (fourteen years old when the story begins), his mother and father and sisters, the neighbors on Bleecker Street, the Irish and the Italians and the Poles and the others, the poor, weak, sentimental alternately coarse and kind, often stupid natives of New York's Greenwich Village, those who attend St. Michael's Church and generally stay pretty close to home, whose lives, uninteresting and unglamorous, have, in the course of the popularization of another kind of Village citizens, been more or less bypassed by the reporters of our time.

It is a way of life. John Kelleher, in the background of a family fight, stood "ready to affirm everything his big wife said. Ready to warn Jude and Kathleen that the baby Jesus was watching every step they made—that they wouldn't, either one of them, get money when the Good Humor man came 'round again."

"Ann looked out at the bare trees in the park. . . . The dream, of becoming famous, of being chosen Miss Rheingold, was something she could believe in when she thought it through to herself."

For the boys on Bleecker Street, they learn early to write on latrine walls, earlier than most the steps

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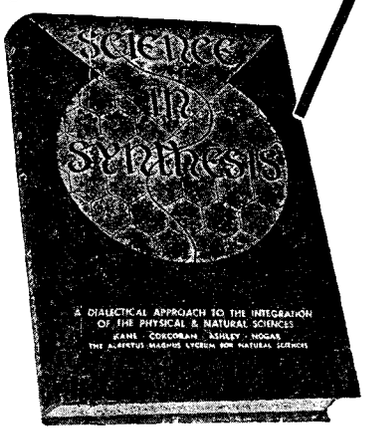

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to seduction. A few go on to college (Fordham is the author's favorite) and supposedly become bigger than the street in which they were born. The others, it would seem, have little choice.

For the girls . . . well, there's always Miss Rheingold.

Eventually, of course, most of them decide on marriage if only as the logical way to satisfy both their own cravings and the law of the Church. Jude Kelleher, after five years of casual relations with neighborhood girls, and occasional excursions uptown after failure in high school and arrest for a break-in, after dreams of being priest, stage manager, infantry soldier, all at a time when he can't get his nose out of a comic book, marries Agnes Sheehan. The author is sure that the marriage will last, but there is little doubt that it will be no more enlightened than his father's before him.

Now this growing up in the street of one's birth is not, certainly, an original idea for a novel. These characters have moved through fiction before, in one book or another. The situations are not new. They could be in Chicago, Columbus or Seattle, and probably have been so recorded. But it is out of his particular treatment of character and situation, his insight, that the novelist creates his specific work, the results that are distinguishable as his own, and, too, that may be distinguished.

It is unfortunate, then, that Martin Yoseloff hasn't given us here more of a novel than he has. What he has given us is the the daily record of a growing up and, with it, as background, the picture of a street and a neighborhood that possess an immutable, if not very important, character. He has told us a story; he has told us what these people are. But he has not told us why they are.

He has not probed the relation of his Kellehers to the Church, of the Kellehers to the Village itself, of the Kellehers to the Sheehans. And it is in the discovery of why they are what they are that the novel would be lifted out of a humdrum kind of telling. As it

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stands it is not complete and it is not important to our knowing; it is only a couple of evenings' reading.

New Poets

POETS OF TODAY. Introduction by John Hall Wheelock. Scribners. $3.50.

By NICHOLAS JOOST

MESSRS. Scribner have initiated what this dustjacket describes as an experiment: publication in one volume of three complete separate books of poems by three contemporary poets who have not yet been published in book form. The choice of the three new poets —Mr. Harry Duncan, Mr. Murray Noss, and Miss May Swenson—is a triumph of editorial taste. Each body of work sets off its companions, and both in the dissimilarities and in the likenesses of its contents *Poets of Today* is valuable as showing some major trends in the poetry now being written and published in America.

Harry Duncan has described his poems as issuing painfully over the years in a thin trickle, and certainly fifteen original poems produced since the late 1930's is, quantitatively, a trickle compared to the gush of verse that has come from several of his contemporaries. Yet, among these fifteen poems, there is not one he need ever be ashamed of, and, possibly, five should, and well may, find their way into the paperbound and textbook anthologies, poems that stand up under rigorous rereading: a brief narrative, "East Rock"; and four lyrics of religious inspiration, "A Bugler Dying," "January Thaw," "At Sea," and "The Body." In a favorable sense, Mr. Duncan's art has thinness, rigor, high selectivity. His art is not sensational; it is clear, realistic, consciously traditional. Mr. Wheelock has stated that it is "metaphysical," and so it is, in the tradition of Dante rather than in that of Donne.

Such a poem as "The Body" offers superficial difficulties, but these result from compactness of

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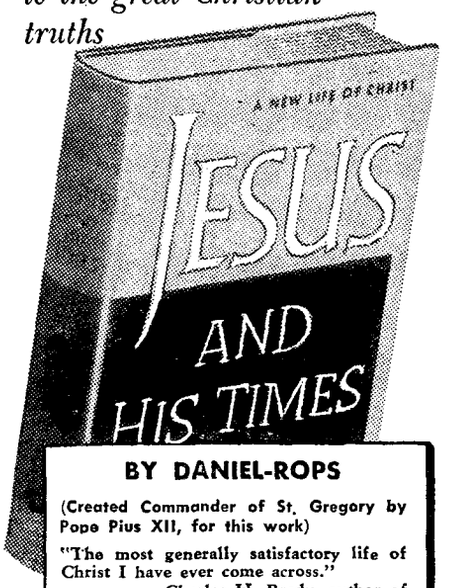

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style and profundities of thinking, not from any failure to communicate. Indeed, none of these three young poets is "obscure;" their work is charged at times, but the shock comes from a vital and electric fusion of emotion and intelligence. And of the three, Harry Duncan shows most lucidly an intelligence which by its philosophical grasp controls impulse, and, concomitantly, a poetic technique that chastens an efflorescence of imagery to achieve art.

Mr. Noss and Miss Swenson, too, are writing in a tradition, but theirs is not the tradition of poetry that is Christian and didactic. They transmit and elaborate the intellectual lessons of romantic nineteenth-century liberalism and the esthetic lessons of Imagism, that poetry combining French symbolism, naturalism, expressionism, and the New Freedom. At its least attractive, we see the young poet —May Swenson, in "Mortal Surge" —writing: "We are eager/ We pant/ We whine like whips cutting the air," and while the poem does gather momentum, also it does end catastrophically: "Our earth a bloody clot of the sun's cataclysm/ sun a severed limb of a shattered universe/ In fission/ explosion/ In separation/ congealment." This of course is a travesty of the kind of poem written around 1916 by Lindsay, Sandburg, Amy Lowell, and Williams.

On the other hand, Mr. Noss writes an old-fashioned type of Imagist poem that is attractively reminiscent of H. D. and much more polished and professional than the orientalisms of Miss Lowell and the lady poets with three names who used to concoct their Japanesey fudge for the summer issues of Miss Monroe's *Poetry*. "Hiroshima" is excellent—until the image is completed in its last three lines by "and nothing more/ Except a crumbled cross of what might once/ have been a Christian church." At which one is tempted to cry with Tully, "*O tempora! O mores!* How many more years must we have these inept Spenderisms exhibited in public?"

It is Mr. Duncan who, for all

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his thin trickle, brilliantly makes his entrance with this volume. His faults are vulgarity, in "Popular Song"—the vulgarity is intended, I know, but still it slips out from under his control—and an overpowering sense of tradition, as in "To Certain Professors of Literature." His poetic merit is his formal virtuosity, especially his handling of *terza rima* in "The Body." Finally, I hail Harry Duncan, and I am keeping in mind the obvious comparisons, because for me he has written the most moving religious lyric of any American poet of his own generation. Here is "A Bugler, Dying:"

Sir, all the field lies mown
and now the loud machines
are stopped, than grass cut down
less murmurous. Such peace
leaves generals alone
to pace their open grave
naming the numberless
whose battles brace the brave
and hearing them converse
when twilight intervenes,
rapt garlands of the dead
on the air faint and terse
to rattle a vaulted head
and cleanse the spendthrift pod,
milkweed and goldenrod,
clover and timothy—
enfranchised poverty
first learned at Mother's knee.
And the spilled seed is God.

REVIEWERS

Erwin W. Geissman is a professor of English at Fordham and an editor of *Cross Currents*.

Anne Fremantle, novelist, biographer, anthologist, and critic, is a contributing editor of this magazine.

Wallace Fowlie, critic and specialist in French literature, is author of *Jacob's Night* and *Rimbauld*.

Patrick F. Quinn is a member of the English department at Wellesley.

Gary MacEoin is the author of *Nothing Is Quite Enough*, and editor of an agricultural magazine.

John A. Lynch, poet and short-story writer, has written for a number of magazines, including *Today* and *The Antioch Review*.

Nicholas Joost is an editor of *Poetry*.

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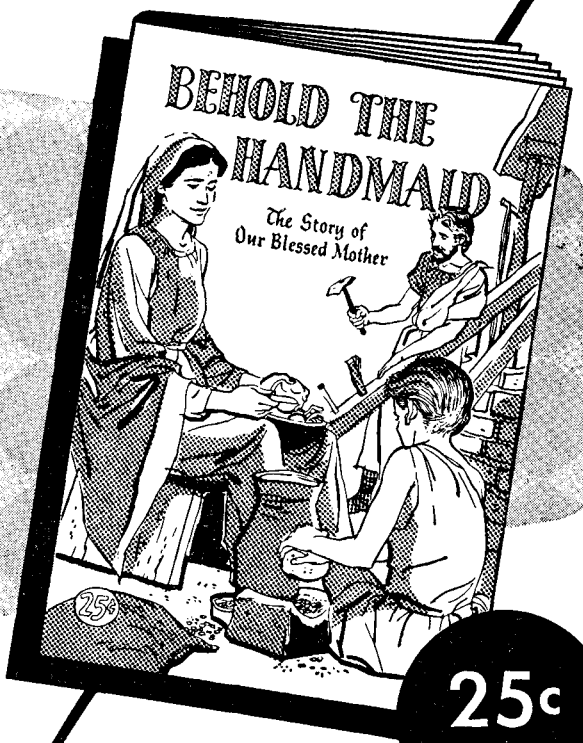

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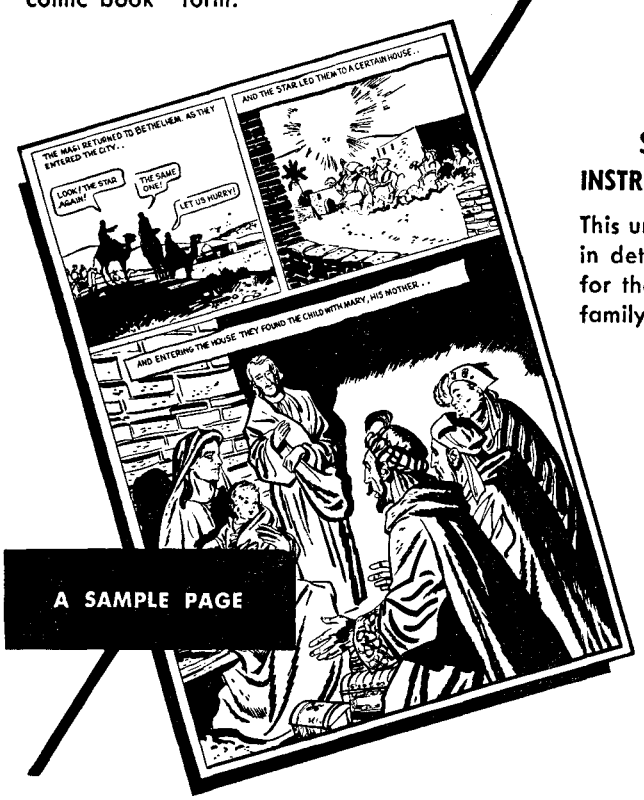
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